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py Easter from

THE BAPTIST

# Record

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section inside

## Church helping spark food revolution

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. (BP) — A Southern Baptist congregation's emphasis on health and fitness has sparked a primetime television series devoted to reversing a trend in a city regarded as one of the nation's most obese.

"I started noticing all the health problems we had due to obesity. It sounds so strong, but that's what it was," said Steve Willis, pastor of First Church in Kenova, W.Va., in the Huntington area. "We had a lot of health issues. I also started noticing when I was traveling around to other cities that people were just in a lot better shape."

"Just walking around the malls out in California and the beach area, people were in a lot better physical condition than here," Willis told Baptist Press. "I remember saying to my wife, 'It seems like every direction I go from home, everybody gets thinner.'"

Willis discussed the matter with the church leaders last summer and told them that even though it's an uncomfortable issue to address, obesity is a serious problem.

"Unlike the sins of pornography and just about every sin that we commit, people that struggle with obesity, it's very obvious," Willis said. "So if I start preaching about that on Sunday morning, people are going to feel singled out. We discussed for about a month how to go about this, and they didn't really feel comfortable about it, but they agreed that the Lord put this on my heart and they agreed it probably was a problem."

The Friday before Willis was planning to broach the subject in a sermon, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a study declaring Huntington the fattest city in America, with nearly half of the metro area residents classified as obese.

"I took the report and shared with the church. This is something the Lord has put on my heart for a long time. I just didn't know how to say it," Willis recounted. "Here's hard and fast proof that we're the largest city in the largest region in the largest country. When I say largest, we're the most obese."

Amid the negative press about Huntington that emanated from the study, a member of First Church Kenova called the K-LOVE Christian radio network to report that the church was taking steps to curb the epidemic by implementing exercise programs and healthy eating lessons.

"What I did was give an invitation and say, 'We're going to do our own Biggest Loser here and everybody who is more than 40 pounds overweight, I want you to join and I want you to start getting in shape,'" Willis said. "This is what God wants you to do: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength."

"We talk a lot about the heart, soul and mind, but we don't talk a whole lot about loving Him with all our strength. We have these covered-dish fellowship dinners where we pile on the food, and it's not godly. Gluttony is one of the seven deadly sins, so we needed to address that."

"We started working out, we started eating healthier, we started doing our Wednesday evening fellowship meals a little bit healthier, and K-LOVE started running



CREATING A REVOLUTION — Steve Willis (left), pastor of First Church in Kenova, W.Va., and Jamie Oliver, host of ABC's Food Revolution, exchange a key to the city of Huntington during a quest to improve the health of local residents. The effort by Willis and Oliver is the subject of a six-week series on the ABC network. (BP photo)

the story of what we were doing," Willis said. "ABC picked it up, CNN picked it up, the national news wire picked it up, and Jamie Oliver heard about it over in England."

Oliver, a noted chef and media personality, had been working on a project with school lunch programs in England and called First Church Kenova to inquire whether he could help improve the school lunch programs in Huntington.

"I said, 'Absolutely. We'd love to have you,'" Willis said.

The result is a six-week series on the ABC network entitled, Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution. A crew started filming in Huntington last fall, and they've wrapped up everything except the final 10 minutes of the series, the pastor said. That will happen after Easter.

The show focuses on the local school cafeterias, chronicling Oliver's efforts to introduce healthier foods and methods.

"I've seen the shows, and the church is the common denominator that is always shown in a positive light," Willis said. "I had a concern when they first came to town that they were going to make us look like dumb hillbillies and a bunch of condescending Baptists."

"Usually ABC doesn't necessarily present Baptist churches in the best light, but they assured me and there were some like-minded believers on the show that said we were going to be painted in a positive manner. Sure enough, they have, all through the show," he said.

The film crew asked Willis to preach again his sermon addressing obesity, and part of that is included in the show.

"They show me working with a family in the church, some visitation I've been doing. One of the families that goes to the church

was having some health problems due to dietary issues and a lack of exercise. Then they start focusing on that family and how we're trying to get them healthier," he said.

As the series unfolds on television, First Church Kenova continues to offer exercise programs and special dinners showing people how to prepare food in more healthy ways in an attempt to reach out to the community.

"We are just trying to raise awareness," Willis said.

The pastor expressed frustration with fellow Southern Baptist pastors who are reluctant to address one of the nation's fastest-growing problems.

"We'll jump on every bandwagon and talk about drinking ourselves to death and smoking ourselves to death, and we'll talk about the institution of marriage, and I agree we need to address those things," he said, "but more people are dying and more families are being disrupted because of eating disorders — gluttony included — than these other issues. More people are dying due to complications from obesity than alcohol and tobacco use combined."

"Why isn't the church at the forefront of this? It's frustrating to me that nobody wants to talk about this," Willis said.

The secular media has pummeled him with requests to talk about the issue, and the week of the series premiere Willis was in New York to promote the show.

However, he hasn't gotten much response from fellow Christians. "God wants us to take care of our bodies," Willis said. "As pastors, especially in Baptist churches, people see us as hypocrites when we address smoking and alcohol abuse but we don't address issues concerning gluttony."



# Bible storying initiative launched by Willis

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — Avery Willis, retired senior vice president of the International Mission Board (IMB) and creator of the MasterLife discipleship series, is beating leukemia. After only a few weeks of treatment, his cancer is in remission.

Willis, 76, was diagnosed with an aggressive form of the disease on Jan. 7. He surprised doctors and family members with a quicker-than-expected remission in February.

With his health improving, Willis is turning his attention back to discipleship. He sees a parallel between the church's struggle with discipleship and the disease he has begun to battle.

Normally, bone marrow in the human body produces red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets, Willis explained. Red cells carry oxygen while white cells fight viruses and bacteria. The platelets help the blood to coagulate.

"What happens in leukemia is an abnormal development in the DNA so that the body produces large numbers of immature cells that do not do their function," Willis said. "They don't carry oxygen. They don't fight disease and they don't clot."

"We produce a lot of [church] members, but they are not carrying out their functions because we have an overabundance of abnormal cells."

Willis, however, is calling for a return to the original "DNA" of discipleship — Jesus' method of Bible storying.

Bible storying has been used as an evangelism and discipleship method for more than 25 years. Many missionaries use the approach to reach illiterate cultures. However, Willis believes that storying can be a universal method for discipleship not only for oral cultures overseas, but in the United States as well.

"Jesus told parables because He knew that 90% or more of the people in His day didn't read," Willis said. "God wired us for stories. We like stories. We remember stories. They penetrate beyond our heads and get down into our hearts."

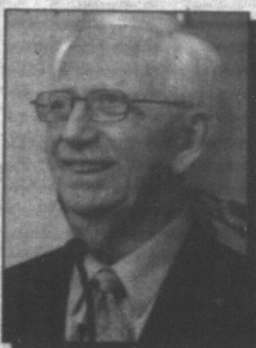
Willis and other proponents of Bible storying will launch DNA 21: Discipleship Revolution, at New Orleans Seminary (NOBS) on April 22-24. The launch will be simulcast via interactive video in Atlanta; Orlando, Fla.; and Little Rock, Ark. The conference will teach church leaders how to implement a Bible storying discipleship approach in their churches.

Another former IMB vice president, Tom Elliff, will be a keynote speaker at the event along with Avery Willis and Jim Putman, pastor of Real Life Ministries church in Post Falls, Id. Experienced Bible storying discipleship makers will assist with the conference program in New Orleans and at the simulcast sites.

"Our job is to disciple the church using the Bible stories God has given us," Willis said. "The stories are so rich. A person has to experience [storying] to actually believe it."

Willis was awakened to the plight of oral learners during the "Amsterdam 2000" conference on evangelism. When a friend asked how to disciple non-readers, Willis answered with an honest, "I don't know."

"I have been asked that question for 20 years. I'm not working with illiterates; if you are, you figure it out," Willis said at the time.



Willis

His friend replied, "You know something about discipleship; that's your job."

"I realized then that 70% of the unreached people groups are functionally illiterate," Willis recounted. "With every effort I had made to try to simplify discipleship and make it as clear as possible, including MasterLife, I still

missed altogether the people who didn't read."

Willis began to look at the way Jesus taught using stories, parables, and proverbs, and he learned about Bible storying. Willis and eight proficient Bible story tellers spent three years developing and recording an audio resource of 400 Bible stories. The stories can take a person with zero biblical knowledge to the level of a pastor or church leader without having to read, Willis said.

In 2004, Willis helped organize the International Orality Network during the Lausanne Forum on World Evangelism. The group now focuses on what Willis calls the world's "oral majority" — the four billion people who cannot or will not read.

About four years ago, Willis began to think about the discipleship needs of the American church. Then it clicked — Willis began to see Bible storying as a viable option in literate cultures. In fact, Willis believes storying can be a universal discipleship method.

First, Willis noted the number of non-proficient readers in the United States: Just less than 50% of the population cannot read or cannot read well enough to feel comfortable reading aloud in a small group context. Willis also realized that many Americans under the age of 25, who grew up with electronic media, the Internet, and social networking, choose not to read even though they can. He saw that Bible storying is easily reproducible.

About that time pastor Jim Putman of Real Life Ministries, a young church plant in Idaho, asked Willis to help develop and implement a Bible storying-based discipleship program. Willis agreed to the challenge. Real Life would serve as a test case for his theory.

The results: Real Life, which started in 1998 with only four couples, now has 8,500 members, with 7,000 involved in small groups. The church has planted five additional churches in the region and trains other churches to implement orality-based discipleship programs on a monthly basis.

Willis has discovered a number of advantages to this method. First, deep truths can be communicated clearly in a short amount of time. The stories take only about five minutes to tell. Then the leader asks questions and allows the group participants to dig out the truths God has placed there. Leadership development happens naturally in the context of the group.

Second, the stories are memorable. After the meeting, participants are encouraged to tell the story to others in their spheres of influence. Parents take the story home and share it with their children. Churches like Real Life Ministries have found that orality-based discipleship is an effective way to develop a biblical worldview in both children and adults.

Another advantage to Bible storying is that discipleship groups remain "open." Someone can join the group at any point, which is not always the case with other discipleship methods.

People who attend the DNA-21 launch in New Orleans or at a simulcast location can expect to learn the basic skills needed to implement orality-based discipleship in their churches. In addition, participants will receive several resources to help with the implementation of the method.

"Our goal of DNA 21 is to bring back first-century discipleship," Willis said. "We believe the same elements of first-century discipleship still work today and can replace the DNA of the 21st century, and that's why we are having this launch April 22-24."



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND  
FRONT PAGE

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## Waterproof Bible

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP) — Among all the attributes of the Bible celebrated by Southern Baptists and other evangelicals, waterproof and durable can now be added. The idea for the Waterproof Bible, formerly called The Outdoor Bible, came to Bobby Bardin and Michael Marsee, whose love for God's creation and His Word often resulted in wet pages. Their mutual desire for a waterproof Bible was the impetus for their founding of Bardin & Marsee Publishing. Suitable for missionaries preaching in the rain, soldiers on foreign battlefields, pastors baptizing new Christians, and fumble-fingered duck hunters, the Waterproof Bible's pages are impermeable. Verses can still be underlined with a ballpoint pen or marked with a dry ink highlighter. The pages are synthetic, not paper laminated in plastic, with the type actually imbedded in each plastic page. Available in the NIV, NASB, and KJV translations, there's even a pink-covered version for ladies who want to soak in a bubble-bath and God's Word simultaneously, Bardin said. Serving as editor and exclusive writer for the Waterproof Bible is Chuck McAlister, a former Arkansas pastor whose love for hunting and evangelism led him to start the award-winning TV show AdventureBound Outdoors. "I know of some hunting lodges whose owners are Christians, and they put copies of the Waterproof Bible in their deer stands as a way to witness to their customers," said McAlister. The Bibles can be purchased at LifeWay Christian Stores. For more information, visit [www.waterproofbible.com](http://www.waterproofbible.com).

## Looking back

### 10 years ago

A six-month evaluation of a five-state Baptist convention response to needs in Nicaragua stemming from Hurricane Mitch results in more than 235 houses being built, five new churches, and 600-plus recorded professions of faith.

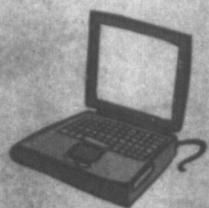
### 20 years ago

Charles Fuller, chairman of the SBC Peace Committee, endorses a plan voiced by First Church, Houston (Texas) pastor John Bisagno for a new coalition of Baptists "committed to a perfect, infallible Bible." Fuller, in his church newsletter, says the proposal has "refreshing potential."

### 50 years ago

Southern Baptist preachers are among the lowest paid of America's working people, according to a study by the Relief and Annuity Board. The average Baptist pastor takes home \$2,312 per year as opposed to the average Baptist family's income of about \$5,000.





## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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# What it took to get us here

He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

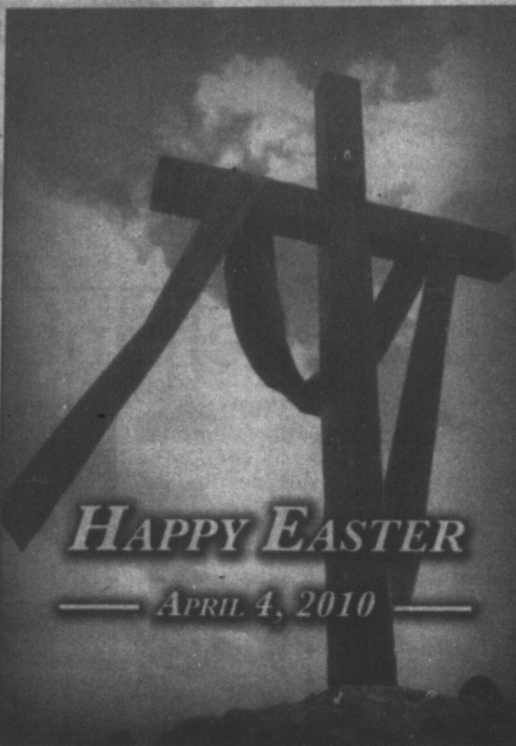
Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. — Isaiah 53:2-9 (NIV)

As we rightly prepare to observe Easter 2010 with the joy and appreciation of the saved, we know that our Savior lives and is one day coming for us, His beloved. There's no doubt about that.

Christians celebrate our risen Savior with images of the empty tomb with death clothes neatly folded on the slab of rock where Jesus was laid. Our crosses



memorialize the sacrifice He made for us, and emphasize the significance of His resurrection. To those religious symbols we have added eggs, bunny rabbits, and baskets of colorful candy.

Sometimes it seems too neat and clean — almost sterile. It's an easy thing to read a few chapters of the Bible once a year or so about the mistreatment of Jesus and then go about our daily business. Perhaps we should pause during this season of victory, and remember exactly what it was Jesus went through to save us. It wasn't nearly as pretty as our modern images depict.

The beating that Jesus endured can hardly be imagined today, in our gentle society. All the flesh was literally torn from his back, exposing raw nerve endings and ragged muscle. On that mangled and bleeding back was placed a wooden cross, large and heavy and rough so that the pain in His still-fresh wounds would be maximized. He was beaten again as he carried his own instrument of death to the place of the skull.

There, he was stripped naked and fastened to the cross he had carried with the large-diameter, blunt-end nails of the day that severed nerves and blood vessels with great agony. His feet were affixed in a similar manner, configured so as to make it impossible to breathe once the cross was upright.

His cross dropped with a thud into the hole where it would stand, no doubt tearing the flesh around the nails and further opening the wounds. After a short while, insects attracted from great distances by the scent of His blood settled into the open wounds.

He hung there, gasping for breath and pleading for water as those around the cross ridiculed him. The pain rose, the insects increased, the mockery rang in his ears, and yet His only plea was for His Father to forgive us.

After a prolonged period of agony, it was finished and the happy part began. The tomb was soon empty, our Savior had risen, and the world would never be the same.

We Christians have every right to celebrate the greatest event in history, the completed plan of eternal salvation for all mankind. However, let us never overlook what it took to get us to that point. It wasn't pretty, and it didn't come without unimaginable suffering, but it had to be done. The prophet Isaiah understood those facts 700 years before Christ was born. On this and every joyous Easter, we should too.

## GUEST OPINION:



### Don't be afraid

By Russell D. Moore  
Louisville, Ky.

Christ and His Kingdom better if we did it with a certain tranquility of Spirit, a tranquility that signals we're not afraid of the rise and fall of temporal kingdoms and their policies.

The words, "do not fear" and "don't be afraid" are among the most common phrases on the lips of our Lord — in both Old and New Testaments — and on the lips of his angelic messengers. I wonder why?

Isn't it because "perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18)? Isn't it because we "did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear" (Romans 8:15)? Isn't it because the Spirit prompts us not to "fear anything that is frightening" (1 Peter 3:6)?

In fact, the Holy Spirit through King David, in a con-

text far more frightening than that of our own, calls us to "fret not yourself because of evildoers" who will soon pass but "trust in the Lord and do good" (Psalm 37:1-3).

Here's why this matters. Most of us don't preach hellfire and brimstone sermons any more on hell and God's judgment, but hellfire is exactly what Jesus said we should fear. "And do not fear the ones who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul," our Lord tells His disciples. "Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

Jesus not only teaches this; He lives it. Jesus doesn't fear the crowds attempting to stone Him. He doesn't cower before Pilate. He isn't afraid of the Sanhedrin.

He's confident and tranquil even when He's being arrested — but when he faces drinking from the cup of judgment of His Father, He sweats drops of blood.

If we were half as outraged by our own sin and self-deception as we are by the follies of our political opponents, what would be the result? If we rejoiced as much that our names are written in heaven as we do about such trivialities as basketball brackets, what would be the result?

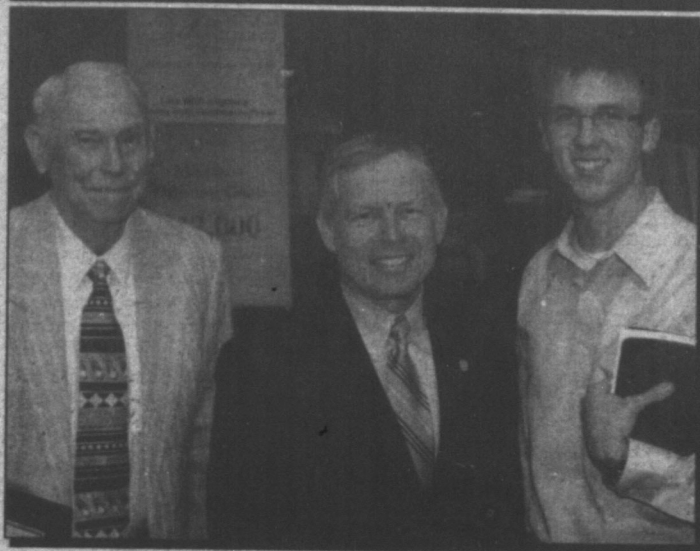
If what you're afraid of is a politician or a policy or a culture or the future of Western civilization, don't give up the conviction but give up the fear. Work for justice. Oppose evil. Do it so that your opponents will see not fear but trust, optimism, and affection.

"So now faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Fear God and, beyond that, don't be afraid.

Moore, a Biloxi native, is dean of the School of Theology at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. This column first appeared at [www.russellmoore.com](http://www.russellmoore.com), and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press.






1. Byrd, Royce, and Sims



2. King and Xu



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1. Chase Sims, Jones County, is the recipient of the 2010 Byrd Memorial Preaching Award at Mississippi College. Shown are Harrell Byrd, President Lee Royce, and Sims.

2. Tommy King, president of William Carey University, presents a Bible to Tongwen Xu, president of Linyi Normal University in Linyi, China during a recent visit to the Shandong province. WCU and Linyi have begun a teacher exchange program that will include exchange students in the future. The Bible is the first book to be included as part of a library agreement between the two universities. Shown are King and Xu.

3. A contingent of Blue Mountain College writers and English majors recently attended the Sigma Tau Delta International Convention in St. Louis. Front row: Sherrell Settlemyres, sponsor from Ripley; Chelsea Harrell from Ripley; Kimberly Shelton from Rienzi; and Michal Roberson from Arkabutla. Standing: Andrew Best from Pride, La.; Betty Hearn, sponsor from Blue Mountain; and Jesse Huggins from Glen.

4. Sue DeLaune, assistant professor of nursing at William Carey University, is the lead author of the nursing text Fundamentals of Nursing: Standards and Practice published by Delmar Cengage. DeLaune authored this fourth edition with P. K. Ladner and the textbook is currently being used in nursing schools throughout the United States and Canada.

5. Mississippi College music professor James Sclater is retiring this spring after devoting four decades of service to the Christian university in Clinton. Members of the MC family will say thanks to Sclater at a special concert in his honor Sunday April 11 at Provine Chapel. Friends, students and colleagues will perform his music that afternoon at 3 p.m. The event is open to the public.

6. The Blue Mountain College Ministerial Association recently awarded James L. Travis Scholarships to 31 students. Lucille Travis (center), widow of the late Dr. Travis, recently met with the group (listed alphabetically): Jeffrey Adams of Hickory Flat; Eric



3. Blue Mountain College writers and English majors



6. Travis scholarship recipients

Allen of Bethel Springs, Tenn.; Joshua Baker of Etta; Damian Cantu of Aberdeen; Charlie Cisco and Sam Cisco of Lamar; Steven Crews of Huntsville, Ala.; Kyle Davis of Spring Hill, Tenn.; Lee Davis of Southaven; Larry Dickerson of Olive Branch; Cole Edwards of Houlka; Carey Gainey of Thaxton; Micah Gilmore of Huntsville, Ala.; Jonathan Greer of Meridian; Corey Hall of New Albany; Andrew Harbor of Corinth; Brad Hill of Ripley; Thomas Magers of Nettleton; Ray Manning of Blue Mountain; Bartley Nethery of Corinth; Jordan Norris of Hueytown, Ala.; Joshua Ray of Cordova, Tenn.; Matthew Reeder of Thaxton; William Andrew Reeves of Corinth; Kyle

Rosas of Millington, Tenn.; Seth Sexton of Lucedale; Tremaine Sterling of Baton Rouge, La.; Logan Strachan of Walnut; Daniel Thompson of Blue Mountain; Clark Whitten of Michie, Tenn.; Jarred Wilson of Oxford.

7. Wayne Vandriver, BSU director at Northeast Mississippi Community College, took students on a mission trip to North Little Rock, Arkansas, during spring break. The students helped Runyan First Church with door-to-door survey/personal evangelism and helped I Corinthians Church by painting their kitchen and fellowship hall. Students involved were Kayla Kohutok, New Albany, and Ross Phillips, Corinth.

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VTCW ETQX EVXB; EVIDRV  
EVXM SAZBU DG EI VXTJXC,  
EVXCSX KZAA Z UOZCR  
EVXB WIKC.

TBIF CZCX: EKI

Clue: B = M

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark Two: Twenty



YOU CAN RESPOND  
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

## WHERE ARE YOU LOOKING?

It was still early Sunday morning and I was on my way to one of our churches to speak as I observed an accident. It was on the interstate at an intersection where there was a long entry ramp. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a car that was traveling the same direction that I was, coming down the ramp to enter the interstate flow of traffic. I just happened to look over and saw the driver looking in my direction but actually looking over behind me. I assumed that the driver was trying to see the flow of traffic in order to merge on to the highway. The driver was actually going faster than I was. He was still looking backward and got a little bit ahead of me. On down the entry ramp, I saw a car that was moving at a snail's pace. Still watching the driver who apparently was moving forward into their peripheral vision and still looking back toward me, I waved my hand and blinked my lights trying to get the driver's attention to tell him that there was a car going really slow in front of him.

The driver never understood the message I was trying to send and within a hundred yards or so, he plowed into the back of the car that was creeping along. It tore up the back of that car and tore up the front of the one where the driver kept looking backward. Both vehicles were damaged badly.

I stopped long enough to make sure that no one was hurt and then went on down the road.

Have you ever seen folks like that on your journey? They keep running into things, having wrecks and demolition experiences because they keep looking back rather than looking ahead. Jesus warned us about approaching life in that manner as He said to His followers, "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Jesus knew and wanted us to understand that if we live focused on the past, we will probably crash in our present. It is sad that so many of us live our lives locked into the past and are never able to move ahead. We want to and we even talk about it. We wonder why we cannot leave the past and focus on the future.

One of the problems that we have is that we just keep looking in that direction. Anything that happens or anything that is said goes through our events from the past filter. Do you remember that first Easter morning when Mary came to the tomb? There she was in the garden and

## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board



according to John 20:11, she had stooped down and was looking into the sepulcher. Her heart was broken, and you can visualize her weeping, dropping her head, glancing back into the tomb, and wondering, "What now?" Someone came up and she assumed that He was the gardener. He asked, "Why are you weeping?" Heartbroken, her eyes filled with tears, and mostly just transfixed on the tomb and the ground she said, "They have stolen the body of my Lord." Then the person she thought was the gardener said, "Mary."

Can you imagine what an electrifying, glorious moment that was when He spoke her name and she recognized His voice? It changed the direction she was looking. She turned and grabbed hold of Jesus only to hear Him say, "Don't hold on to me, I have not yet ascended to my Father." The remarkable thing is that she was on the verge of missing the joy and blessing of seeing Jesus because she was looking the wrong way.

Has that ever happened to you? Have you seen people who have been distracted by overwhelming problems, devastating experiences, and losses of which they are confident they cannot recover? They are unable to see the Lord show up because they are looking in the wrong direction. The eyes of faith are always looking in the Lord's direction and for His revelation when He shows up. However, if you are not alert and looking for Him, you are captured only by despair, death, and doubt and more than likely you will never see Him.

What is it that has your attention? What is it that so overshadows the presence of Jesus? What is it that keeps turning your head to the point where you have been crashing time and time again, still wishing you could be on a different road? The thing that is needed the most is to turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

The author can be contacted at [jfutral@mbcb.org](mailto:jfutral@mbcb.org).

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# THE BAPTIST *Record* SPECIAL EDITION

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

## Church found faithful through disaster

By Tony Martin  
Associate Editor

March 25, 2009, was a normal day for Corinth Church in Magee. The GAs were proud of their food drive for the Battered Women's shelter, the RAs were meeting as well as other mission and youth groups. In the sanctuary, the church held prayer time and Bible study.

Pastor Jay Wesbrooks had been preaching a series through First Peter which dealt with how to live in and conquer trials, and on that night began to teach how the church should work through trials and suffering. After the regular church meetings, several members pitched in to prepare the church for an upcoming wedding.

About 1:45 a.m. on March 26, many in the area were awakened by an F3 tornado. Soon afterward, word spread that Corinth Church, which had been established in 1910, had been destroyed.

What has transpired in the year since is a testimony of the faith and unity of a local church body. It is also a testimony as to how a people can give generously, even in the midst of tragedy.

The church worshipped on the disaster site Mar. 29 after the tornado, and since then has been meeting Sundays at Copiah-Lincoln Community College, and on Wednesday nights at the South Fork Fish House in Magee. "We tried to continue all the same ministries we always have," said Wesbrooks, "but some of them have been abbreviated. For instance, Vacation Bible School was scaled back. We try to do everything we have done in the past — RAs, GAs, Mission Friends, and everything else."

Now the church is about to finish its rebuild on the same site. Plans are to celebrate on May 2 with the church's homecoming, 100-year anniversary, and a building dedication.

Wesbrooks states that God showed the church He would build the church back, using His people. "Just as in the Old Testament, when God put out a call to build the Temple, He put out a call to rebuild His house in the Corinth community." After the storm, the church was flooded with phone calls of encouragement and people desiring to help rebuild.

There were two large groups of framing carpenters, Builders for Christ and the Carpenters for Christ, that offered aid. The first wall of the sanctuary was raised May 27 by the Builders for Christ. The sanctuary was framed in about ten days. After the Builders for Christ left, the Carpenters for Christ arrived. This group

framed the fellowship hall and most of the educational building. The two groups represented about 250 people from 17 different states. From that time God has used volunteers from Corinth Church as well as other churches in Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee.

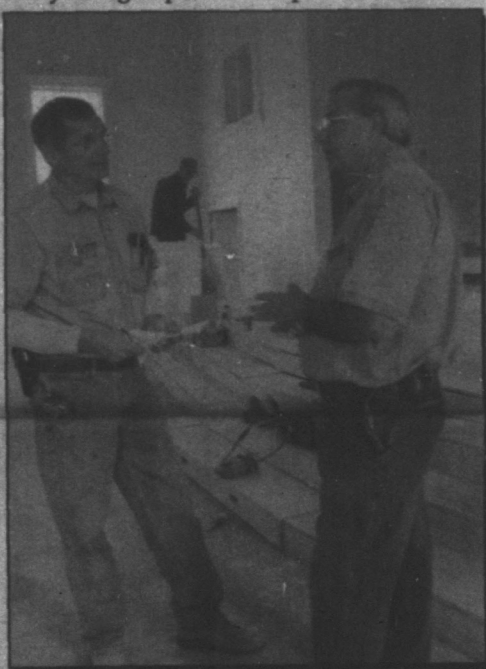
"We received so many gifts, but we can't quit giving," said Wesbrooks. The church has a rich history of giving to mission causes, and gives 10% of their offerings to the Cooperative Program. "The Lord has blessed us so much. We've been able to give to another church that was damaged in the tornado. That's the heart of our people. We give to special needs. We've supported people who have been to Haiti since

all ready to go home. God has sent a lot of volunteers here, but He's used a lot of our people. The people who can't work provide food for volunteers and lots of prayer.

"The biggest thing is that we just want to honor God," Wesbrooks continued. "Our faithfulness has come from a love for God."

Wesbrooks is quick to acknowledge the mission of the church. In an article he wrote, Wesbrooks said, "God has done wonderful works in our community since March 26, 2009, but one of the greatest things He has done is keeping our people together through a difficult time. No one desires to lose all that you have, but when all you have left is Jesus, Jesus is all you need. When there are so many churches bickering over little things, it has been our prayer to set an example for other churches to see that you can work together no matter what the circumstances.

The lesson that I hope we will take away from this is, if people can come together to rebuild God's house, we can come together to build God's kingdom."



NEARING COMPLETION — Danny Welch (left) site coordinator for the reconstruction of Corinth Church, Magee, and pastor Jay Wesbrooks inspect work in the sanctuary of the church. The church will celebrate its 100th anniversary, homecoming, and dedication of the new facility on May 2. (Photo by Tony Martin)

the earthquake. We've never considered not giving. It never came up, any idea that 'we need to stop giving.' It was assumed by us that we'd continue to give. No matter what has happened to us, there are missionaries who still need money."

Wesbrooks has been at the church for almost eight years. "It's just a giving and praying church. Our theme has been to remain faithful, focused, patient, and together," and we've worked hard at that. We try to stay faithful to attendance and focused on ministry, doing the same things we've always done, and that includes giving. I've shared with our church that we can be an example to other churches, in every area, of giving and faithfulness. We want to show people that we can work together as long as we let God lead. God has made us look good. When we've needed something, God has sent it. For example, we needed some plumbers, and the week after Easter we have a group coming in to set fixtures. God has provided."

According to Wesbrooks, the church members have worked hard, too. "We have people here every day. Several people start gathering around 5 p.m., and they just stay until we're

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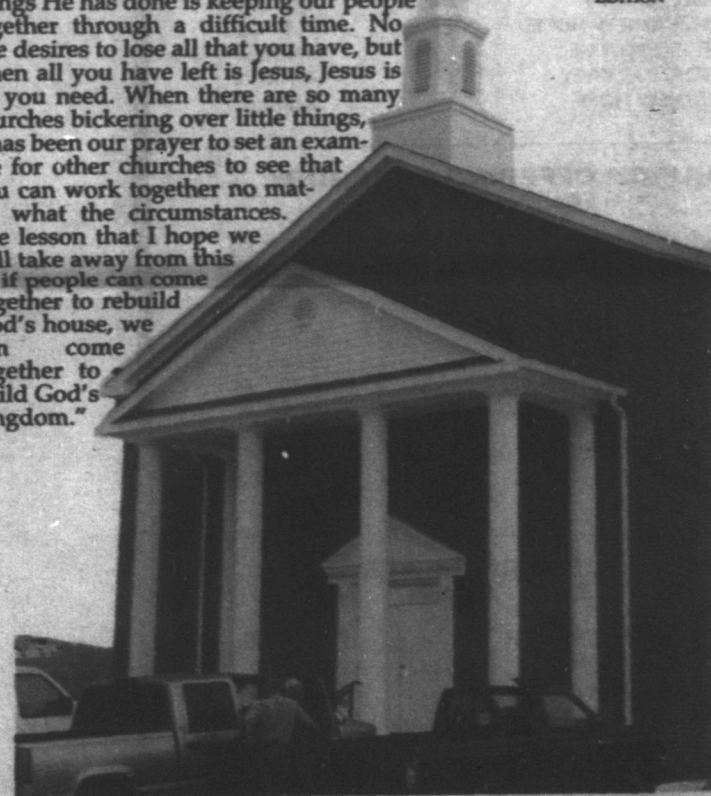
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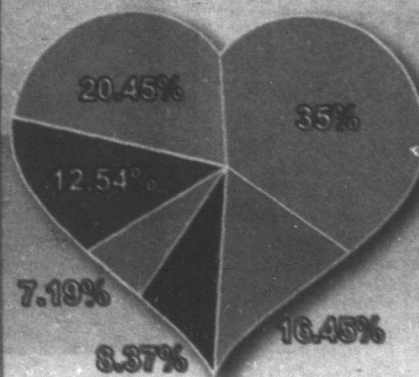


SPECIAL  
COOPERATIVE PROGRAM  
EDITION



### 2010 COOPERATIVE PROGRAM MISSION BUDGET

#### MISSISSIPPI'S HEARTBEAT FOR MISSIONS



Global Missions/SBC  
\$11,933,012

Christian Education  
\$6,971,209

Church Growth Ministries  
\$4,273,718

State Benevolent  
Institutions  
\$2,453,447

State Missions  
\$5,612,083

Executive Leadership  
and Communication  
\$2,850,877

GRAND TOTAL = \$34,094,322



## JUST FOR THE RECORD



2. Pike Association mission trip



3. Lebanon Association brunch



4. First Church, Quitman



5. Longview Church, Starkville

1. Port Gibson Church, Port Gibson, is having the Lord's Supper, 6 p.m., Apr. 1; Good Friday services, 6 p.m., Apr. 2; Easter egg hunt, Apr. 3, 2:30 p.m., and Easter services and cantata Apr. 4, 11 a.m.

2. Pike County Association sponsored a mission trip to Bela Bela, South Africa Jan. 11 - 20. Shown are participants Veronica and Sara Moak, Bogue Chitto; Smittie Buie, Magnolia; Paula and Ron West, pastor, Calvary Church; Jan and Erika Viljoen of S. Africa and Tseasa Ministries, Doug Lawrence, Fernwood, and in front, Lisa Jammack, Magnolia.

3. Lebanon Association held a Women on Mission Brunch recently, with Nineteenth Avenue Church hosting the event with 32 guests. Monty Bounds, pastor; George Berger, AMD. Shown are the participants.

4. First Church, Quitman, collected enough funds to send 317 Buckets of Hope to Haiti.

5. Longview Church, Starkville, held a deacon ordination Mar. 21 for Edwin Neal Mitchell, Sr. Shown are Mitchell, Barbara Anderson Mitchell, and interim pastor Doyle Cumming.

6. New Henleyfield Church, Pearl River Association, ordained four deacons Mar. 21. Shown are Byron and Renee Burge, Doug and Carolyn Lee, pastor Drew Dabbs, Mignon and Mark Kellar, and Melissa and Craig Wise.

7. Trinity Church, Neshoba Association, had over 25 members participate in the Find It Here prayer walk Mar. 20 as part of the God's Plan for Sharing: Cover Mississippi in Prayer strategy. Shown are group members praying at the Neshoba County courthouse. Mike Carr, pastor.

8. Stonewall Church, Stonewall, and Enterprise Church, Enterprise, met together for the annual Mom and Me event at Camp Garaywa, Clinton. Shown are the participants.

9. Hopewell Church, McCool, had a deacon ordination Feb. 21. Shown are pastor Timothy Black; deacons Don Miller, Bobby Dorsey, and Ken Adcock; and Roger Griffith.



6. New Henleyfield Church



7. Trinity Church, Neshoba Association



8. Stonewall and Enterprise Churches



9. Hopewell Church, McCool



# RAM CENTURY CLUB GIVING

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM GIFTS ARE ACTUAL RECEIPTS POSTED BY THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION BOARD FROM OCTOBER 2008 - SEPTEMBER 2009

## Cooperative Program Our Heartbeat for Missions



"At Scotland Baptist Church we believe in the Cooperative Program through our continued support each year. CP has not only been essential to Baptist missions and ministry in the past, but will also be essential for the future. As Mississippi Baptists we must continue to support the Cooperative Program by looking forward to the great missions and ministry that will be done through our communities, state, nation, and the entire world."

**Paul Trosper - Pastor, Scotland BC, Winona**

"As pastor of a small Delta church, it is my privilege to say that we have supported the Cooperative Program over the years with great enthusiasm. This past year was no different. We, through the Cooperative Program, are able to join hands with fellow believers in an effort to help further the cause of Christ. We are glad to be a part of helping undergird so many avenues of ministry. We look forward to continued participation in the work that we all share together."

**Wayne Kimbrough - Pastor, Calvary BC, Greenwood**



"I am so blessed for a lifetime of supporting all facets of our Lord's work through the Cooperative Program. I am grateful for learning about commitment to the Cooperative Program in the early 1950s at First BC, Coffeeville and being blessed to continue that privilege here at Bethel since 1994."

**James Edwards - Pastor, Bethel BC, Water Valley**

### CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$100,000 - \$149,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
MID-DELTA/SKENE	28,815.40
CALHOUN/PLEASANT HILL	20,833.08
NORTH CENTRAL/HEBRON	19,418.08
TISHOMINGO/NEW LIBERTY	16,751.10
RANKIN/ROCK HILL	16,283.91
CLARKE/ROLLING CREEK	16,033.15
YAZOO/CONCORD	15,776.00
JONES/PINE GROVE	15,585.00
X-TENDED MISSIONS/ARKABUTLA	15,214.47
MISSISSIPPI/FBC GALILEE	15,155.90

### CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$150,000 - \$249,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
PIKE/TERRY'S CREEK	41,852.16
SCOTT/SPRINGFIELD	39,110.98
PONTOTOC/ECRU	39,098.67
UNION CO./ELLISTOWN	38,280.84
RANKIN/CATO	35,588.02
RANKIN/PUCKETT	34,890.89
LAWRENCE/SHILOH	33,253.33
X-TENDED MISSIONS/FBC SOUTHAVEN	32,522.10
JONES/SANDERSVILLE	32,481.00
FRANKLIN/MEADVILLE	32,265.97

### CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$250,000 - \$499,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
PERRY/FBC RICHMOND	72,389.00
PIKE/CENTRAL	70,591.04
NEWTON/HICKORY	68,836.59
RANKIN/PELAHA/CHIE	62,422.73
PEARL RIVER/PINE GROVE	57,470.00
COV-JEFF DAVIS/FBC COLLINS	56,284.18
MARSHALL/FBC HOLLY SPRINGS	55,953.00
LAUDERDALE/WESTWOOD	55,494.42
WAYNE/PLEASANT GROVE	54,514.54
MISSISSIPPI/LIBERTY	54,125.73

### CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$500,000 - \$999,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
MONTGOMERY/FBC WINONA	172,754.95
LAUDERDALE/FBC COLLINSVILLE	130,887.08
JONES/FBC ELLISVILLE	119,351.22
LAWRENCE/MONTICELLO	112,086.61
BENTON-TIPPAN/FBC RIPLEY	108,951.69
SIMPSON/FBC MAGEE	104,066.52
ALCORN/WHEELER GROVE	100,896.58
LEE/FBC BALDWIN	100,837.18
RANKIN/BRIAR HILL	100,571.00
NORTH CENTRAL/FBC GRENADA	99,690.11

### CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY: \$1,000,000 and above

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
METRO/FBC JACKSON	842,057.75
METRO/MORRISON HEIGHTS	521,985.42
LEE/HARRISBURG	428,024.24
METRO/BROADMOOR	342,816.87
GOLDEN TRIANGLE/FAIRVIEW	341,709.70
LEE/CALVARY	339,854.62
METRO/COLONIAL HEIGHTS	325,564.94
NORTH CENTRAL/EMMANUEL	320,820.63
METRO/FBC MADISON	287,161.18
LEBANON/TEMPLE HATTIESBURG	281,066.71



# 2009 COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORIES ARE BASED ON CHURCH OFFERING REPORTED ON THE 2008-2009 ANNUAL CHURCH PROFILE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY:

\$25,000 and below

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
GOLDEN TRIANGLE/WAKE FOREST	4,060.06
BENTON-TIPPAH/SHADY GROVE	3,709.30
NOXUBEE/MASHULAVILLE	2,236.66
MID-DELTA/MT. VERNON	2,072.92
YAZOO/ROCKY SPRINGS	1,695.22
ATTALA/PILGRIMS REST	1,637.87
COV-JEFF DAVIS/ANTIOCH	1,580.43
GOLDEN TRIANGLE/FRIENDSHIP-COLUMBUS	1,532.96
JACKSON/FBC ORANGE GROVE	1,516.22
MONROE/ATHENS	1,499.00

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY:

\$25,000 - \$39,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
PRENTISS/WHEELER	7,955.96
HOLMES/FBC DURANT	7,113.40
CLARKE/SOUENLOVE	5,561.71
UNION/FAYETTE	5,277.89
UNION/CO./MYRTLE	5,086.84
CARROLL/SHILOH	4,897.00
ITAWAMBA/NEW HOME	4,111.03
MONROE/SPLUNGE	4,024.32
NEWTON/PINCKNEY	4,008.70
JONES/NEW HOPE	3,956.00

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY:

\$40,000 - \$54,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
PEARL RIVER/OLIVE	7,813.00
YAZOO/OAK GROVE	7,669.55
YAZOO/EDEN	7,060.91
NEWTON/ROCK BRANCH	6,759.00
GOLDEN TRIANGLE/STURGIS	6,586.94
MID-DELTA/LINN	6,390.09
CALHOUN/OLDTOWN	6,198.24
KEMPER/CENTER RIDGE	6,000.00
AT LARGE/CROSSROADS CHURCH	5,394.78
GEORGE-GREENE/LEAF	5,323.33

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY:

\$55,000 - \$74,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
YAZOO/BETHLEHEM	9,280.00
CARROLL/MCCARLEY	9,176.00
WEBSTER/DOLLARS GROVE	8,887.19
MISSISSIPPI/CROSBY	8,752.00
NEWTON/MIDWAY	8,549.00
NEWTON/LIBERTY	8,140.00
CARROLL/LIBERTY	7,987.93
SHARKEY-ISAQUEUA/DEER CREEK	7,980.02
MID-DELTA/YALE STREET	7,296.58
YAZOO/SOUTHSIDE	7,214.29

## CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY:

\$75,000 - \$99,999

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
WINSTON/CADWY	14,309.71
HUMPHREYS/BEULAH	12,171.26
ATTALA/MCCOOL	11,310.82
LAMAR/GRAL	11,087.48
WARREN/NORTHSIDE	11,002.00
CHOCTAW/WEIR	10,823.43
PERRY/INDIAN SPRINGS	10,688.65
PONTOTOC/LIBERTY	10,540.72
CHOCTAW/HOPEWELL	10,472.12
SHARKEY-ISAQUEUA/VALLEY PARK	10,391.83

# Cooperative



YE SHALL BE  
MY WITNESSES  
TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH ...

ACTS 1:8

## 2010 Cooperative Program



# First Person: Celebrating the Cooperative Program

By David Michel  
Correspondent

Every year in April, Southern Baptists set aside a day to celebrate the Cooperative Program. This year, the special Sunday is April 11.

Since 1925 the Cooperative Program has provided the financial infrastructure for stabilizing our global missions enterprise. Any student of Baptist history realizes the essential role the Cooperative Program has played in allowing Southern Baptists to become the largest evangelical missionary sending denomination in the



Michel

world. We deploy more than 10,000 missionaries and account for over 1,000 baptisms per day.

Despite the unparalleled success of the Cooperative Program, it has fallen under criticism recently during discussions of a Great Commission Resurgence among Southern Baptists. What has happened to cause such a loss of status for what was the missional darling of our denomination? The answer to such a question is not simple. The Cooperative Program required 80 years to first formulate. Now 85 years into its existence (1925–2010) it

is time for careful evaluation. Many things have changed, but let's highlight a few that may be the most significant.

When the Cooperative Program was first approved, mission boards and other convention agencies were operating from a financial deficit position. Money was borrowed each year in the hope that gifts during the year would match and exceed loan requirements. Church leaders recognized how untenable that scenario was and were willing to allocate a portion of their congregation's offering to put mission performance on a firmer footing.

Today, thanks to the financial stability granted by years of Cooperative Program giving, our mission boards and educational

institutions are strong enough to fulfill their own ministries and compete for church offerings. The financial stability promised through cooperative giving has created unintentional competition among various organizational entities in Southern Baptist life.

When the Cooperative Program was first approved, a struggling regional denomination willingly confessed that a global missions assignment could never be adequately addressed except through deliberate cooperation. Each church, each association, and each state convention needed the combined strength and financial resources of its neighboring Baptist entities. Hence, the agreement to "elicit and combine" missional energies in "one sacred effort for propagating the gospel" was gladly embraced.

Today, the largest evangelical missionary-sending denomination in the world, along with a growing number of affluent megachurches, is not as willing to confess interdependence and reliance upon cooperative giving. Proof of that unwillingness can be measured by evaluating giving trends over the last forty years. Until the mid-1960s our mission boards received the majority of their income from the Cooperative Program, but since then the majority has been derived from designated offerings through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. The desire of individuals to control their contributions along with a growing mistrust of institutional effectiveness has eroded our confidence in unified giving.

The early success of the Cooperative Program led to a false sense of security that we had solved, once and for all, the challenge of missions funding. The \$75 Million Campaign was a five-year precursor to the adoption of the Cooperative Program. Although only \$58 million were given by churches during the campaign, mission agencies received between 80%-90% of the total dollars they had received the previous seventy-five years of Southern Baptist history. These overwhelming results led to quick adoption of the Cooperative Program in 1925. The next forty years of success and church growth gave the false impression that all was settled.

Then in the late twentieth century, the post-Christendom revolution shocked Southern Baptists into new missional awareness. Our churches have lost moral influence in the Deep South. Militant Islam has threatened world security. American public policy has shaken loose from its Judeo-Christian foundation, and hundreds of unreached people groups have no missionary witness at all. The Cooperative Program solution appears to have lost its potency, and the mis-

sional demands of the 21st century go unmet. What are we to do?

Several first-step considerations may be in order. A primary missional responsibility is developing good stewards. When was the last time your congregation conducted a tither's enlistment emphasis? The easiest way to increase mission gifts is to increase the number of believers who tithe. The outstanding numbers first realized in the \$75 million campaign came from increased giving over a five-year period. If we are serious about the new global challenges of missions, we must begin to express it through sacrificial giving.

A second missional responsibility of churches is confessional interdependence. We need one another.

Cooperative Program giving does not begin nor will it be resolved in Nashville, Richmond, or Jackson. It starts in the budget planning meeting of a local church. The Cooperative Program percentage allocation represents the corporate will of the congregation to fulfill the Great Commission. If believers deliberate on the biblical priorities of the church they will make appropriate mission support decisions and, when joined by sister congregations and denominational mission leaders, they will find great encouragement in working together. Churches that broaden their understanding of mission support will also take seriously the responsibility to call out missionaries and church planters to increase the missional human resource pool.

Finally, competition never results in collaborative synergy, but often creates winners and losers. In a world where loss is growing exponentially and where missional energy and resources are limited, Southern Baptists cannot afford to lose any momentum from pointless competition. Agency leaders at every level of denominational life should open conversations about how to elicit and combine our spiritual energies for the sake of Christ. Defending past successes or protecting the institutional status quo will not expand God's Kingdom nor move Southern Baptists into the 21st century. Financial cooperation will have to move toward missional collaboration if we hope to transform a spiritually fragmented world.

Rather than just celebrating the Cooperative Program this year, why don't we begin to revitalize it? The Apostle Paul reminds us, "You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God." (II Corinthians 9:11)

Michel is associate executive director for mission strategy at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson. He can be reached at [dmichel@mbcb.org](mailto:dmichel@mbcb.org)

## JUST FOR THE RECORD

1. Temple Church, Myrtle, ordained Daniel Thompson to the gospel ministry Mar. 14. Shown are pastor Donnie Schuman and Thompson.



1. Temple Church, Myrtle

2. The youth of Neshoba Church, Union, visited the church's widows and widowers Valentine's Day, bringing puppets, Valentine cards and a big hug. Shown are the participants.



2. Neshoba Church, Union

3. Pleasant Hill Church, Tippah County, held ordination services for new deacons Pat Hopper, Justin Seawright, Stacy Banks, and James Harrison, minister of music. Shown are Harrison, Ray Owen, Bates, Lyndell Davis, Seawright, J.W. Kellum, Hopper, and Larry Wilbanks.



3. Pleasant Hill Church, Tippah County

4. Tomnolen Church, Euproa, will host the Greens in concert Apr. 10, 7 p.m. A love offering will be received.

5. Crestview Church, Petal, is having Easter services Apr. 4 including a church-wide breakfast at 8 a.m., services at 9 a.m., and an Easter egg hunt at 10 a.m.

6. The youth and leaders of Lakeside Church, Hattiesburg, sponsored a Valentine banquet Feb. 13. Ray Moody, pastor.

7. Corinth Church, Heidelberg, will hold Easter Sunrise services Apr. 4, 6 a.m. The choir will present the cantata, The Offer Still Stands. Chris Wells, pastor.



2010 MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST  
COOPERATIVE PROGRAM BUDGET

MISSIONS ALLOCATIONS

Global Missions/SBC

17.50%	International Mission Board	\$5,966,506
7.98%	North American Mission Board	\$2,720,727
7.76%	Theological Education	\$2,645,719
1.19%	SBC Operations	\$405,722
0.57%	Ethics/Religious Liberty Comm.	\$194,338
<b>35.00%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,933,012</b>

Christian Education

8.99%	Mississippi College	\$3,064,543
6.85%	William Carey University	\$2,335,089
3.32%	Blue Mountain College	\$1,131,424
1.12%	Board of Ministerial Education	\$381,676
0.17%	Education Commission	\$58,473
<b>20.45%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$6,971,205</b>

State Benevolent Institutions

2.64%	Church Retirement & Protection	\$900,000
1.96%	Baptist Children's Village	\$669,902
1.26%	MS Baptist Foundation	\$435,045
1.07%	Christian Action Commission	\$365,764
0.21%	Historical Commission	\$72,736
0.03%	MS Baptist Health Systems	\$10,000
<b>7.19%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,453,447</b>

State Missions

6.03%	Collegiate Ministry	\$2,056,848
2.64%	Woman's Missionary Union	\$900,201
2.10%	Men's Ministry	\$715,964
1.88%	Missions Mobilization	\$640,436
1.56%	Mission Strategy	\$533,097
1.37%	Church Planting	\$467,919
0.87%	Stewardship	\$297,598
<b>16.45%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,612,063</b>

Executive Leadership & Communication

2.41%	Business/Financial Services	\$821,209
1.84%	The Baptist Record	\$626,505
1.48%	Executive Administration	\$502,977
1.30%	Communication Services	\$442,637
0.92%	Computer Information Services	\$314,774
0.42%	Convention & Convention Comm.	\$142,775
<b>8.37%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,850,877</b>

Church Growth Ministries

2.46%	Discipleship & Family Ministry	\$836,580
2.10%	Capital Needs	\$715,000
2.06%	Sunday School	\$698,922
1.60%	Church Music	\$544,024
1.38%	Church Growth	\$469,172
1.20%	Pastor/Leadership Development	\$408,661
0.91%	Evangelism	\$311,747
0.85%	Church-Minister Relations	\$289,632
<b>12.94%</b>	<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$4,273,716</b>

**GRAND TOTAL**  
**\$34,094,322**

# Small church equals big heart

By Tony Martin  
Associate Editor

Crossview Church in Brandon is typical of many churches across the state of Mississippi. With an average Sunday School attendance in the mid-50's and 70-75 people in worship, Crossview might be any Baptist church in any area of the state. What is notable about the church is its desire to give sacrificially to causes outside the church itself, through the Cooperative Program and other missions offerings.

The church was begun as a plant from another church in 1986 and has had three pastors in those years. Current pastor Don Williams has served Crossview for 18 years. A bivocational pastor, he also works at First Church, Richland. What is significant about Williams' tenure at Crossview is how he has led the church to be generous givers toward missions even in the midst of ongoing building programs.

The numbers tell part of the story. In 2009, the church — with 124 resident members, according to 2008 reports — gave almost \$12,000 to the Cooperative Program. Total contributions to the church totaled \$181,640, with \$53,574 of that amount used for CP and other mission causes, including gifts to Rankin Association, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering, and the Baptist Children's Village. Their giving has remained consistent even during extensive building programs at the church.

"When I first came to the church, it was meeting in two mobile chapels," said Williams. The mobile chapels were trailers once provided by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board for temporary space needs.

"The Board provided one, and we had another. When I began here, the church had already adopted plans for a building, which is the sanctuary and educational space," Williams continued. "I became the pastor in March of '92, and by September we started this building. It took about a year to get the first phase of the building built. We were able to get this all finished and paid for within ten years, and that's one of the reasons we've been able to give to missions emphases. We really made strides in doing mission work in the last five or six years."

The church's new building will be what Williams calls a "family fellowship center." It will consist of a fellowship hall, kitchen, and bathrooms. "We want to reach some younger families," Williams said, "and this building will help."



**BUILDING THE KINGDOM** — Bivocational pastor Don Williams, Crossview Church, Brandon, is seen standing in front of their new family fellowship center, currently under construction. The church has been able to undertake two major building projects in the last 18 years without compromising giving to the Cooperative Program or other mission causes. (Photo by Tony Martin)

How has the church been able to take on such ambitious projects and remain faithful in Cooperative Program and missions giving?

"We are usually in some sort of mission campaign," said Williams, "and people are generous. We've learned the value of giving to missions, and that has been one of the big keys to our ongoing success. People have caught on to this. They have seen the real thing about giving, about what God will do. If we stay in step with God in missions, we believe that God will bless the church financially." For example, the church led Rankin Association in per capita giving toward the Annie Armstrong Offering in 2008.

Church members have been faithful to give beyond their regular offerings. "We might see a couple of Sundays that have been low, but we get caught up," said Williams. "I do emphasize in my preaching what God does when we give. Our folks see what is going on in other parts of the country, we have missionary speakers visit, and people step up to the occasion. Even with that, our people see the need to reach the upcoming generation, and that's why they've been so willing to give and to get behind our new building."

Williams is plainspoken when it comes to the Cooperative Program.

"This is one area where we can help our missionaries and mission causes," he said. "It also helps our seminary students and other causes. I've seen churches that don't participate in CP, and they have missionaries that have to raise their own support. CP is a tool that is beneficial to all areas of the convention. Without it, where would our workers be? It gives us the chance to be part of something bigger than ourselves."

"God has really been good to our church," Williams states. "He's given us folks that have the same passion about missions that I have. There is no way we could do what's being done without some means such as the Cooperative Program and our mission boards."

"When I settled that the Lord didn't want me to go to the mission field, that He wanted me to stay and pastor a church, I promised Him that I would raise up a church somewhere that would stand firm on missions. I think the reason He has blessed has been because we've stayed in step with Him."



# Pro-lifers: Obama abortion executive order is worthless

WASHINGTON (BP) — U.S. President Barack Obama's March 24 signing of an executive order related to federal funding of abortion did nothing to placate pro-life opponents of a new health-care law.

One day after he signed the controversial health-care reform measure, the president issued an executive order the White House said would apply longstanding restrictions on government support of abortion to the new law.

The signing of the order contrasted sharply with that of the health-care legislation. Whereas the March 23 signing of the bill into law came before a packed East Room of cheering supporters, Obama endorsed the executive order with 14 congressional Democrats and no reporters gathered in the oval office.

The order, nearly all pro-life organizations say, does little to prevent federal money under the legislation from being used to fund abortions or subsidize insurance plans that cover abortions. It addresses only a couple of the provisions of concern for pro-lifers, and it addresses at least one of those inadequately, according to the legal pro-life organization Americans United for Life.

Federal courts are almost assured of ruling in favor of the language in the law, not in the executive order, pro-lifers say. In addition, Obama or any future president could rescind the order at any time.

"The executive order does not carry the force of law," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville. "This is why the U.S. Conference of Catholic

Bishops made it clear that the executive order did not 'begin to address the problem' of protecting the unborn, and the reason is simple: The courts have made it clear that an executive order does not stand up to laws passed by Congress. We have over four decades of federal courts mandating that abortion is required in federal health-care programs unless Congress clearly forbids such funding."

An amendment sponsored by Reps. Bart Stupak, D-Mich., and Joseph Pitts, R-Pa., extended the current restrictions on federal funding of abortion to the health-care legislation. The House of Representatives approved that amendment as part of the bill it passed in November. The Senate version that returned to the House and gained narrow passage March 21 did not.

"The Stupak-Pitts amendment would have forbidden federal funding of abortion, Land told Baptist Press on March 25. "President Obama's executive order does not."

Land pointed to the failure of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America to offer meaningful criticism of the executive order. Planned Parenthood is the country's leading abortion provider. Its affiliates performed more than 305,000 abortions in the last year for which statistics are available.

"Why has Planned Parenthood been relatively quiet?" Land asked, before answering: "Because they know that [the executive order] will be trumped by the federal courts. Planned Parenthood is already looking for a woman who will go to a federally funded clinic and ask for an abor-



EXECUTIVE ORDER SIGNED — U.S. President Barack Obama (seated) signs an executive order on March 24 regarding federal funding of abortion in the new health care law. Witnessing the signing are Rep. Bart Stupak of Michigan (immediately to Obama's right) and 13 other Democratic members of Congress. (BP photo courtesy of The White House)

tion and, if she is refused, will go into court, and the executive order will be stricken down."

Family Research Council President Tony Perkins said in a written statement after Obama signed the order, "The White House was right to keep the event low-key because the signing doesn't change anything. The order is, as Planned Parenthood President Cecile Richards pointed out, 'a symbolic gesture' that has absolutely no bearing on what the legislation does and does not fund."

Stupak, who led a half-dozen other Democrats who agreed to sign the health-care bill after Obama promised the executive order, attended the signing ceremony in the oval office and continued to defend the document.

"This Executive Order protects the sanctity of life," Stupak said in a written release after the signing. "Today's signing was the culmination of many months of hard work to pass legislation that provided our nation with much-needed health care reform while protecting the sanctity of life."

Land said, "Congressman Stupak and his pro-life Democrat colleagues, who did provide the critical margin of victory for ObamaCare, have traded their pro-life heritage for a mess of pottage, and the pottage will soon be turned over."

The decision by the small group of Democrats who identify themselves as pro-life to support the health-care bill has continued to cost them with organizations who previously had supported them.

The Right to Life of Michigan Political Action Committee announced on March 24 it had rescinded its endorsement of Stupak in his re-election campaign. The West Virginians for Life PAC said on March 22 it would oppose the re-election of Democratic Reps. Alan Mollohan and Nick Rahall in November.

The House approved the Senate version of health-care reform in a 219-212 vote. Thirty-four Democrats joined all 178 Republicans in voting against the measure.

Many pro-life advocates say the new law could

increase the number of abortions. It permits the funding of insurance plans that cover elective abortions, reversing a long-standing federal policy.

Congress' own insurance plans, for example, cannot cover abortions. The bill requires that anyone who has a plan that covers abortion — even a man or elderly woman — must pay a separate fee to cover abortion, in addition to his or her premium.

The law also appropriates seven billion dollars to the country's 1,200-plus community health centers without stipulating the money cannot be used for abortions, pro-life organizations say. Politifact.com, an independent fact-checking website, said that while none of the community health centers currently perform abortions, it is theoretically possible they could do so under the bill's language.

"If you focus on the technical possibilities — which is an entirely legitimate thing to do — who can say whether a court might rule that without a specific prohibition, abortions could be permitted?" the website asked.



**Secret Girl Tour**

**Saturday, April 10, 2010**  
6:00 p.m.  
doors open at 5:15 p.m.

**North Greenwood Baptist Church**  
615 Grand Blvd.  
Greenwood, MS • 662-453-2801

Tickets are on sale at NGBC  
or [www.itickets.com](http://www.itickets.com)  
\$10 per person or  
\$15 at the door,  
\$8 per person for group of 5

## REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

1. Plainway Church, Laurel: Homecoming, Apr. 4; morning service followed by dinner on the grounds; Harold Ishee, speaker; Colette Ishee, music.
2. First Church, Hazlehurst: Homecoming and revival, Apr. 18 - 21; Sun., 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Robert Hanvey, Lee Allread, Chris Goolsby, and Don Gann, speakers; Roy Daughdrill, Aaron Odom, Jay Johns, Jennifer Custer, Gary Watts, 4given Quartet and the First Church Children's Choir, music.
3. Willow Grove Church, Collins: Youth led revival, Apr. 16 - 18; Fri. - Sat., 7 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Luke Johnson, speaker; Daniel Lee, music; Rocky Holston, pastor.
4. Leflore Church, Holcomb: Revival, Apr. 11 - 14; Sun., 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Larry Kilgore, speaker.
5. Highland Church, Senatobia: Revival, Apr. 11 - 14; Sun., 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Jere Phillips, speaker; Glenn Herring, music; Greg Hurt, pastor.
6. New Hope Church, Foxworth: Revival, Apr. 18 - 21; Sun., 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Bud Parker, speaker; David Blakeney, music.
7. Green Valley Church, Pontotoc: Revival, Apr. 4 - 7; Sun., 10:30 a.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Kevin Merriitt, speaker; Marilyn Gillespie, music; Floyd Lamb, pastor.
8. Calvary Church, Columbia: Homecoming, Apr. 11; Bobby Wagoner, speaker; Hosanna, music.



# Shelters give new hope to tsunami victims in Chile

TIRUA, Chile (BP) — Wiping tears from her eyes, the 21-year-old mother thanked Baptists for providing shelter for her family.

"I want to give thanks to everyone for this shelter," Rosa Inostroza de Santibañez said of the 10-by-20-foot structure with wood walls and a tin roof for her family in Tirua, Chile. "We are very thankful. We are going to sleep under a roof tonight and not on the ground."

She and her family had been living in a makeshift lean-to pieced together by her husband Rodrigo after the family had to flee to higher ground to escape an earthquake-induced tsunami on Feb. 27.

"We didn't know what we would have done if you hadn't come," Rosa said of the Chilean Baptists and volunteers from Second Church in Russellville, Ar., who delivered the shelter on March 24. "We didn't have any other options open to us."

Early in the morning of Feb. 27, an earthquake crumbled their roof. Less than an hour later a tsunami crashed into their Pacific coast town. Rosa and Rodrigo grabbed their two-year-old daughter while Rosa's mother Luz pushed her 30-year-old, wheelchair-bound daughter up a steep hill amid neighbors running and cars racing to escape the wave.

The older daughter is living with other relatives, while Luz stays with Rosa and her family on the hill. They had been sleeping in a tarp-covered enclosure just large enough to hold two twin-sized mattresses pushed together. They've salvaged some of their belongings by making trips on foot up and down the hill to get dishes and blankets.

At night, their young daughter Anahís is afraid as the cold coastal winds of Chilean autumn whip against the tarp in the dark. Rodrigo and Rosa comfort their daughter by shining a flashlight. They have no electricity.

Luz doesn't like sleeping in the sec-

tion of the family's home that wasn't damaged, because aftershocks continue. "I'm afraid that the tremors are going to get stronger instead of weaker," she said.

Municipalities are helping families rebuild, but the need is far-reaching. Many homes at water's edge were swept away, strewn debris and belongings along the Tirua River that feeds into the ocean. Local authorities also are providing food at a school located at the bottom of the town's hill.

The bread store where 20-year-old Rodrigo worked as a baker was damaged. Looters stole all the equipment. Rodrigo volunteers at the school, helping distribute food and clothing until the bread store reopens or he can find another job.

It may take families several years to rebuild, to make repairs or to add on to temporary shelters to make them more permanent, said International Mission Board missionary Trent Tomlinson. Rodrigo agreed. "This will be our home for a while," he said.

Tomlinson realized this area's need while he and fellow missionaries Anders Snyder and David Hines drove through it to assess damage two days after the quake. About 50 people representing churches from several denominations met in Tomlinson's home, forming a plan to fan out and meet needs generated by the disaster.

"This is an open door," Tomlinson said. "We're earning the right to be heard here."

The volunteers delivered pre-assembled shelters to four other families, including handyman Juan Gonzalez. His home, located 650 feet from the ocean, was destroyed by the tsunami while he was staying in Concepción, close to the earthquake's epicenter.

"I'm one of the fortunate ones to be able to move in [to a shelter] so quickly," Gonzalez said.



BACK AT HOME — Rosa Inostroza de Santibañez watches her two-year-old daughter Anahís play in the light cast from the window of their new shelter built by Chilean and Arkansas Baptists. (BP photo)

Fisherman Manuel Arias came home from a family gathering to find his house, boat, and dock destroyed. "I was feeling desperate, not knowing what to do," Arias said. "I almost felt like I was out of the hands of God."

His shelter is being put together in a section of town called Nueva Esperanza (New Hope). "I've got new hope now to keep moving forward," Arias said.

Mario Barros, president of Iglesia Misionera Internacional Agape (Agape International Missionary Church, an association of national Baptist congregations), met with the mayor of Tirua the day before volunteers arrived with the shelters.

"We want to be organized and be a channel of hope to those who need it," said Barros, who works alongside Tomlinson as a church planter.

Honey producer José Prado from Iglesia Bautista de Cunco (Cunco

Baptist Church) responded to a request Barros made on a Christian radio station for help in transporting the shelters prefabricated by volunteers in Temuco. He donated the use of his open-bed transfer truck, which he uses to transport beehives. He drove the shelters 80 miles to Tirua and helped with their construction.

"I always like to help and when I heard Mario on the radio... I saw this as a possibility to do that," Prado said.

It took Chilean and Arkansas Baptist volunteers about three days to construct sections for five shelters. It will take several weeks to construct the hundreds of shelters that have been requested, Tomlinson said.

*Editor's note: Updated prayer requests for Baptist relief work can be viewed at [imb.org/pray](http://imb.org/pray). Information also will be updated through Twitter at #QuakeResponse.*

## Baptist workers see openness to Gospel in wake of Haiti disaster

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (BP and local reports) — While traveling to a crusade in Bouce Carre, Haiti, the vehicle carrying Craig Culbreth broke down in a remote area. Peering under the hood at a busted radiator hose, Culbreth and his traveling companions, De Louis Labranche and Michele Elius, who nerve with the Confraternite Missionnaire Baptiste d'Haiti convention (CMBH), were soon surrounded by 14 Haitians who appeared seemingly from nowhere to offer assistance.

As Culbreth, Florida Baptists' partnership missions director who was scheduled to preach during the crusade, prepared for the hour walk to Bouce Carre, one of the locals reached into the engine and pulled out a brand-new rubber hose from the bottom of the motor — the exact size needed to repair the radiator.

With the car fixed, Culbreth and his fellow travelers arrived at the crusade within 30 minutes just as he was scheduled to begin speaking. At the conclusion, 143 people made professions of faith.

"I'd love to be able to explain what happened with the car," Culbreth said, "but I know if we had purchased the new hose we would have stored it inside the car. Nor can I explain why it was the exact size we needed."

He does believe, however, that the incident is just one of many ways "God has proved how much He cares about the work being done in Haiti" through Southern Baptists and the CMBH churches.

Ten weeks after the Jan. 12 earthquake hit Haiti, Baptist leaders in the hurting nation see an openness to the Gospel unseen before, spawning a renewed urgency to their task.

In the days after the quake, Haitian pastors reported 40,127 professions of faith among their churches as Haitians sought hope amid the rubble. This fresh spiritual renewal compelled the pastors, with funding from the Florida Baptist Convention, to conduct a series of crusades across the nation.

During the first wave of these crusades — four large association-wide events and 51

smaller local meetings — the Baptist pastors in Haiti have reported another 18,038 conversions, totaling 58,167 new Christian believers in their earthquake-scarred land.

In the crusades he attended, Culbreth noted, the Haitian pastors met with the new believers for as long as three hours explaining their newfound faith.

Among those attending the crusades were two voodoo priests who came to know Christ before the earthquake. Their transformation led to the conversion of many other voodoo priests, Culbreth said. A second wave of crusades began on March 22.

Seven new churches also have been started among the Haitians, one with 140 people in attendance, Culbreth reported. Another church was planted in a Port-au-Prince garbage dump where one of the Haitian pastors lives. A pastor in another city sent pews for church members to sit on amid the refuse.

"I visited that new church on the first Sunday," Culbreth said, "and walked over bro-

ken glass and trash to get to the worship service."

Starting churches in Haiti is "unlike church planting in the U.S.," said Culbreth, a former church planter. "We start a church, say 'here it is' and then try to reach people. In Haiti, they reach people and when they are saved, start the church like the early New Testament Christians in the Book of Acts."

In the two months since the earthquake, CMBH pastors have distributed 87.5 tons of rice purchased in Haiti by Florida Baptist disaster relief funds, providing 680,933 meals to people mostly in the Port-au-Prince region. Florida Baptists have a 15-year partnership with the CMBH and employ seven ministry directors to start new churches — which have totaled 890 to date.

During the week of March 22, a second food distribution began of 60 tons of rice shipped by Florida Baptists to the port in St. Marc. The food distributions in Port-au-Prince, as well as outlying cities where people have migrated, have been done in large part through local pas-

tors who take the rice back to their churches to distribute to their communities.

Yet as volunteer chaplains, including some from Florida's Seminole Baptist Association, counseled with Port-au-Prince-area pastors and their wives, they learned many of the pastors' families were going without food.

The Haitian pastors have sacrificed their own well-being to meet needs of their people, said Gene Gregory, pastor of River of Life Church in Enterprise, who traveled to Haiti March 8-17.

"Even the little bit of food they have received they are giving it to their church members," Gregory said. While there is food from other sources in Haiti, long, unmanageable lines quickly form vying for food, he reported. "Our pastors do not want to stand in line for food because the lines become unruly and they do not believe it is a good witness."

During the months of February and March, more than 90 Southern Baptist volunteers rotated in and out each week of the Florida Baptist Mission House in Port-au-Prince.



## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE\*

### When Easter Becomes Just Another Holiday

I Corinthians 15:1-4, 12-19, 54b-58

By Marion D. Duncan

The problem in I Corinthians 15 is not that the believers doubted the Resurrection of Christ, but questioned resurrection of the body. From the Old Testament, very little is known about the belief of the Jews concerning the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. After death, all men were in Sheol—a place cut off from men and God. The Greeks, for the most part, did believe in the immortality of the soul, but at death the soul was freed from the body which was considered evil and corrupt. However, Jesus could never have taken the form and body of a man if that body were evil and corrupt in the

eyes of God. Gloriously, the Christian belief is that the whole man will rise again and in a body and soul fit for heaven.

Paul reminded the brothers that he preached to them the gospel which they received and by which they were saved. They could be confident in their faith because it was based on historical events. "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." (15:3-4 NIV) Then Paul enumerates the post-resurrection appearances of Christ to men, even Paul, as testimony to this being truth.

It is imperative for us to

Duncan

know what we believe about Christ, to hold firm to our convictions, and practice our faith because of the many false doctrines and religions that seem to be accepted into the mainstream of our society. Several times in the last couple of weeks, I have heard one of our missionaries from an undisclosed part of the world talk about discipling the new Christians where he lives. A program called Training for Trainers (T for T) is used for discipling the new believer in the Christian life through scripture and doctrine. After each lesson, the student is required to go out into his world of family, work, and community and carry out what he/she learned during that session. The next time he/she meets with the missionary, he shares from his experience. If the learner has not carried out his assignment, then the lesson is re-taught until he can share his

faith willingly and effectively. Oh, were we so anxious for lost souls!

Beginning in 15:12, Paul boldly proclaims that resurrection is the foundation of the Christian faith. What a depressing situation it would be if Christ was not raised from the dead—no real basis for Christian hope. "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised." (15:14-15 NIV)

Verse 19 has been translated and interpreted in two ways. The first, "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied," (RSV) which means that Christians are to be pitied if their hope is only an earthly hope, not an eternal hope. The second and most probable is, "If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable." (ASV) If Christ is not raised, believers

have only hoped as unbelievers hope, only wistful trust which rests on nothing eternal.

The cross is at the heart of the Christian gospel; but, by itself, it is cruel and not good news. "Without the resurrection, the gospel is a lie, the Christian life is a vacuum, and the Christian hope is a delusion." (First Corinthians for Today, Dean) But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead offering the world hope, forgiveness, and life after death. "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? ... But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (15:54b-56 NIV)

*"Living, he loved me; dying,  
he saved me;  
Buried, he carried my  
sins far away;  
Rising, he justified freely forever.  
One day he's coming  
—O glorious day!  
—By J. Wilbur Chapman*

Duncan is a member of First Church, Macon.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Resurrection Hope

Luke 24:1-8, 36-39

By Shelby Hazzard

The Lord has Risen —  
Luke 24:1-8

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead (1 Cor 15). "On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went into the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them" (Luke 24:1-4).

The two men at the tomb 'in clothes that gleamed like lightning' were angels in human form announcing Christ's resurrection as they announced his birth and will announce his second coming (1 Thess 4:16).

The angels' purpose was to announce his resurrection and to remind the women that Christ had told them 'he must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' The tomb contained only the grave clothes of Christ, reminding us of our resurrection with Christ leaving our grave clothes behind!

Doubts Can Be Let Go —  
Luke 24:36-43

The same morning, two of his followers were traveling to Emmaus (hot baths). As they travel, the resurrected Christ anonymously joins them and asks the details of their discussion. They react in disbelief, how could someone have just come from Jerusalem and not know what happened? They explain what Christ did, how he died, who they hoped

Hazzard

Christ was and the skeptical report about the angels and the empty tomb.

Jesus firmly confronted their unbelief and explained the reality of the fulfillment of the Scriptures concerning himself. As they approach Emmaus, the men plead with Jesus to stay with them. During supper that night, as Christ took the bread, broke it and gave it to them, the bible says, "their eyes were opened and they recognized him and he disappeared from their sight." They immediately return to Jerusalem.

As they are gathered together in Jerusalem, Jesus suddenly appears in their midst. He spoke to them and let them observe and touch his body, but some still doubted, so he took some fish and ate it in their presence, proving his humanity.

Paul said, "if Christ has not been raised your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Cor 15:17). Occasionally, doubt affects all

Christians as it affected the Apostles. To be a follower of Christ, one does not have to understand everything perfectly, as faith is a life long growing process anchored in Christ. Jude 1:22, commands the right attitude toward doubters, "Be merciful to those who doubt." Another passage that has helped me is John 20:29, "Because you have seen me, you have believed, blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed." Do not be dragged down in doubt, remember that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ!!

Forgiveness is Available to All —  
Luke 24:44-49

Luke 24:44-49 says, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem." The heart of God through Christ can be summed up in one word, reconciliation. We are reconciled to God through Christ, then to man.

It is extremely important to understand that true repentance precedes reconciliation. Quoting from article 4.A. of the BF & M 2000, "regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour."

Do you want God to save you? Do you want to know the power of Christ's resurrection? You must hear the testimony of God through Christ, and the Holy Spirit must convict you of your sin, bringing repentance and faith, granting you the spiritual new birth, as you become a new creation!

Hazzard is minister of evangelism, First Church, Greenville.

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

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THE BAPTIST  
**Record**



# Reports skew debate on proposed textbook standards

GRAPEVINE, Texas (BP)—Despite news reports to the contrary, Texas students will be required to learn about Thomas Jefferson and constitutional religious freedom guarantees, say two prominent members of the Texas State Board of Education.

Additionally, "Nowhere in our social studies curriculum standards is America referred to as a Christian nation," said board chairman Gail Lowe, a Republican from Lampasas, Texas, contrary to claims in a March 22 letter to textbook publishers by the liberal Interfaith Alliance.

In interviews with the Southern Baptist Texan, the news journal of the Southern Baptists of Texas, about new social studies standards for Texas public schools, Lowe and Don McLeroy, the immediate past board chairman, said widely circulated news reports contained numerous inaccuracies, including claims that Thomas Jefferson was left out of the standards, that First Amendment religious freedom guarantees were omitted because conservative board members reject the concept of church-state separation, and that religious dogma had crept into the standards.

The board meeting, held March 10-12 in Austin, made national and international news chiefly because Texas buys or distributes about 48 million textbooks annually, influencing textbook content for most other states.

The Guardian newspaper of London claimed on its blog that the board was "rewriting history," an assertion of the Texas Freedom Network, which bills itself a "mainstream voice to counter the religious right."



Lowe

In the Interfaith Alliance's letter to textbook publishers, the group's leader, C. Weldon Gaddy, wrote that the board's "most egregious vote" was denying separation of religious and government institutions by rejecting a late amendment by Dallas Democrat Mavis Knight that students learn "the reasons the Founding Fathers protected religious freedom in America by barring government from promoting or disfavoring any particular religion over all others."

McLeroy said he believed Knight's amendment would paint the founders as neutral toward religion generally. "They weren't," McLeroy said. "They simply didn't want a state church, a state religion. That's it. To say that we were against protecting the religious freedoms of all the people, that is all spin from the Texas Freedom Network. That's all it is, because it's not right."

Lowe added: "The First Amendment very clearly prevents Congress from establishing a national church, but it also promotes the free exercise of religion. Students need to understand that this is what the founders intended. It is inaccurate to say the Founding Fathers were neutral about religion; most were strong proponents of religious faith but did not believe in a national church controlled by the federal government."

The new standards require, among other things, that students "trace the development of religious freedom in the United States" and "analyze the impact of the first amendment guarantees of religious freedom on the American way of life." Additionally, students must "identify and define

unalienable rights" and "identify the freedoms and rights guaranteed by each amendment in the Bill of Rights."

The board's actions became fodder in the Texas gubernatorial campaign when Bill White, a leading Democrat candidate for governor, claimed on March 17: "Last week the Texas State Board of Education, led by [Gov.] Rick Perry's appointee, voted to remove Thomas Jefferson from social studies textbook standards. That's right. Thomas Jefferson... was deleted from a list of historical figures who inspired political change."

Jefferson was removed from a list of leading Enlightenment thinkers in world history curricula, but he is included numerous times in U.S. government and American history, according to copies of the standards obtained by the Texan. As of March 22, the Texas Education Agency had yet to post the standards online for public viewing.

Lowe said, "The only historical figure mentioned more times than Thomas Jefferson in our curriculum standards is George Washington. There is no way students in Texas will avoid learning of his contributions to our country."

McLeroy, who is finishing his term this year after being defeated in the Republican primary by Thomas Ratliff, widely considered a moderate, said he voted for removing Jefferson from the world history Enlightenment period because Jefferson was merely "a son" of Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and Voltaire.

Responding to critics who say the board has a religious agenda, Lowe said, "The social studies framework is not about religious dogma, church traditions or specific denominational beliefs. To the secular, radical left thinker, however, any mention of reli-

gious belief is anathema. It is those voices who are screaming most loudly because they do not want to admit the extent to which religious liberties and religious faith have influenced our country."

Lowe said religious references are plentiful in the country's founding documents, which are heavily emphasized in the standards. McLeroy said the country was founded on "biblical" principles from Judaism and Christianity, "but you don't see us putting it in the standards that we are a Christian nation and no one is pushing for that."

"The whole idea of the nature of man — man created in the image of God, man as fallen — those things are found throughout [the founders' writings]. Those are the core beliefs about the nature of man that make our country unique — the importance of the individual created in God's image; you don't have a king; and the idea of man as fallen. You cannot trust man 100% so you have a separation of powers. That whole form of government is founded upon a biblical view of the nature of man."

During the meeting, the board also turned back some controversial revisions offered by teams comprised of teachers and scholars. The board voted to retain requirements that students learn about historical notables such as Albert Einstein and Thomas Edison and added language about significant political ideas, including the Laws of Nature and Nature's God cited in the Declaration of Independence.

The new standards will face a final vote in May when the board meets. Standards for given subjects are revised every 10 years. The board has a 10-5 Republican majority and an eight-member conservative voting bloc.

## Q&A: Committee chair Lowe responds to criticism of new standards

GRAPEVINE, Texas (BP) — Texas State Board of Education chair Gail Lowe answers questions about the state's proposed social studies standards, which face a final vote by the 15-member elected board in May. The board's decisions have a significant influence on textbook content nationally because of the volume of textbooks the state purchases. The Texan, the newsjournal of the Southern Baptists of Texas, conducted the interview.

**TEXAN:** Will the new standards or textbooks include language stating America is a Christian nation founded upon and governed by Christian beliefs, as the Interfaith Alliance alleged in a letter to textbook publishers?

**LOWE:** Nowhere in our social studies curriculum standards is America referred to as a Christian nation, but historians have widely acknowledged that our country was founded on Judeo-Christian principles that promote the worth of the individual yet acknowledge man's sinful nature.

The importance of religious freedom permeates the study of American history. We expect

students to explain reasons for exploration and settlement of the United States, which includes their search for religious freedom (taught in both Grade five and Grade eight American history courses) and to describe how religion and virtue contributed to the growth of representative government in the colonies (Grade eight). We also require students to describe the fundamental rights guaranteed by each amendment in the Bill of Rights. Previously, only a handful of the Bill of Rights freedoms were addressed directly in the curriculum standards.

In addition, we believe students should understand the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic and religious groups in the United States (Grade five, Grade eight, and high school U.S. history since 1877), and in U.S. government, students will study how government policies or court decisions have affected a particular racial, ethnic, or religious group.

Religion and faith are a vital part of the American culture, and have been since our founding, but no single religious adherence is addressed in our standards. We recognize that all individuals have inalienable rights endowed

by God, not by government, and that religion and morality are necessary pillars of society, as George Washington said.

**TEXAN:** How do you respond to the Interfaith Alliance's allegation that the conservatives on the board believe "the Founders did not intend for the nation to have separation of church and state"?

**LOWE:** A critical priority of the State Board of Education in our revision of the curriculum standards has been to emphasize the founding documents, such as the Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence, (and) the U.S. Constitution. We believe students need a stronger grasp of the freedoms guaranteed in these documents. The First Amendment very clearly prevents Congress from establishing a national church, but it also promotes the free exercise of religion. Students need to understand that this is what the founders intended. It is inaccurate to say the founding fathers were neutral about religion; most were strong proponents of religious faith but did not believe in a national church controlled by the federal government.

**TEXAN:** Why was Thomas Jefferson removed from the Enlightenment period and where does he appear in the new standards?

**LOWE:** A proposal had been made to list Jefferson in the world history course with European Enlightenment figures John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Voltaire, Charles de Montesquieu, and Jean Jacques Rousseau, who influenced political revolutions from 1750 to the present. Since Thomas Jefferson and his political philosophies are so heavily emphasized in the study of American history and U.S. government courses, members voted not to add this reference in world history so students could devote more time to learning about these additional philosophers.

Thomas Jefferson is taught in Grade five as a founding father and patriot hero. Students must be able to state his contributions during the Revolutionary Period. Jefferson also is taught in Grade 8, where students must explain the significant role he played during the American Revolution. In high school, students must identify the contributions of the political philoso-

phies of the founding fathers, including Thomas Jefferson, on the development of the U.S. government, as well as identify him as a significant individual in the field of government and politics.

As author of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson also will be studied in reference to that pivotal document. The only historical figure mentioned more times than Thomas Jefferson in our curriculum standards is George Washington. There is no way students in Texas will avoid learning of his contributions to our country.

**TEXAN:** Is the conservative bloc of the board allowing its religious beliefs to cause it to push an "inaccurate history of our country" and indoctrinate students in right-wing political ideology?

**LOWE:** The social studies framework is not about religious dogma, church traditions or specific denominational beliefs. To the secular, radical left thinker, however, any mention of religious belief is anathema. It is those voices who are screaming most loudly...



# Gambling pits Baptist officeholders against each other

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP) — Two Southern Baptist politicians are at the center of a gambling debate in Alabama, where the state's governor says electronic bingo machines are illegal and the attorney general says they're not in some cases.

Gov. Bob Riley, a Republican and member of First Church in Ashland, formed a Task Force on Illegal Gambling more than a year ago to enforce state laws that outlaw various forms of gambling including slot machines.

A judge ruled on March 8 that attorney general Troy King, a Republican and a member of First Church in Montgomery, should decide whether to prosecute gambling operators.

At issue are thousands of electronic bingo machines, which look and play like slot machines but dole out cash based on rapid, computerized games of bingo, according to manufacturers.

**Forbidden, but in use**  
Alabama's constitution explicitly forbids slot

machines, but some counties have passed constitutional amendments allowing traditional paper bingo for charity.

Sixteen counties and two towns in the state have such amendments. The Alabama Baptist reported, with four of the counties currently operating the video bingo machines.

Casinos have cropped up in Alabama to compete with Mississippi's Gulf Coast complexes, and millions of dollars have been poured into the industry with some casinos resembling those in Las Vegas.

Glitzy high-rise hotels and other attractions are meant to make Alabama a vacation destination, the gambling industry says.

Last fall the Alabama Supreme Court ruled that electronic bingo machines, which are prevalent in the state's cas-

inos, are in fact an illegal form of gambling because the machines "have none of the elements of human skill and interaction that are fundamental to the game of bingo."

Furthermore, the court said the machines "operate almost exactly like slot machines."

Riley said the ruling was a clear victory for his task force, which was set to shut down illegal gambling halls.

Riley

King, though, asked district attorneys in counties with constitutional amendments allowing paper bingo to study the ruling and determine if the machines used in their areas are legal.

## Baptist opposition

At their annual meeting in November, messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention passed a resolution on bingo gambling, noting that the Alabama constitution prohibits games of chance and the 18 areas with constitutional amendments only approve limited charity bingo for the benefit of nonprofit organizations and for no other purpose.

Local governing bodies, the resolution said, have used such amendments as a means of allowing unlawful electronic bingo gambling to proliferate. Alabama Baptists reaffirmed their opposition to electronic bingo gambling in the state and called on pastors to inform their congregations on the ill effects of gambling.

Southern Baptists in Alabama also asked the state legislature to oppose legislation that would permit or expand gambling of any type, including charity bingo.

## Sordid history

Residents familiar with Alabama history have expressed concern that legalized gambling statewide could lead to a repeat of a dark part of Alabama's past. Phenix City, on the Georgia border near Fort Benning, was known in the 1940s and 50s as the "wickedest city in America" because of gambling, crime, and prostitution.

In 1954, Albert Patterson won a primary for state attorney general on the promise to clean up Phenix City, but before he could win the general election he was shot outside the law practice he shared with his son John.

A sheriff's deputy was convicted of Albert Patterson's murder, and other officials were linked to the crime.

The son was elected attorney general in his father's place and went became Alabama's youngest governor. His political career spanned half a century. The Birmingham News recounted.

Now 88, John Patterson told The News he has watched with dismay as electronic bingo has taken root in the state. "It's just like Phenix City," he said. "Gambling brings the bad people to town and brings out the bad in good people. There's nothing about it that's good."

"There's a group of people in the legislature who think gambling is the answer to all their problems," Patterson said. "Gambling never solved any... problem."

In more recent history, another southern state was able to hold back the trend toward expanded gambling. A decade ago, the South Carolina Supreme Court ruled that video poker games were illegal, and the state's 34,000 video poker machines were reduced to contraband.

South Carolina churches had organized a campaign against the machines, and former Gov. David Beasley, a Southern Baptist, called the video games the "crack cocaine of gambling."

## Nothing like bingo

Riley, Alabama's governor, used a significant portion of his state of the state address in January to warn against legalizing slot machines. "I can't imagine anyone who thinks the best way to help our economy is to have Alabamians lose billions of dollars gambling," he said.

"This is not money spent in the community at local businesses where it would sustain jobs and help the local economy," Riley said. "No, this money is taken out of that county and sent to out-of-state slot machine makers and gambling bosses."

Any scheme that will legalize slot machines under the pretext of generating new revenue is the biggest hustle in Alabama's history, he said.

"Of course, they don't call it that. They call it bingo," he said, "but you weren't born yesterday and neither was I. This is nothing like bingo. These are slot machines pure and simple, and they are illegal for a reason. They are illegal because they're bad for our families, bad for taxpayers and they're bad for Alabama."

The governor went on to describe the social cost of gambling, and he said that in states with casinos, for every dollar casinos contribute in taxes, they cost taxpayers at least three dollars in additional government services to deal with the devastation the casinos leave behind.

Riley that night urged lawmakers to reaffirm their commitment to the rule of law and to enforce the statutes forbidding illegal gambling rather than continuing to overlook

casino operations.

## Casino raids

Two weeks later, Mobile County district attorney John Tyson, commander of the governor's task force on illegal gambling, attempted to raid two casinos, VictoryLand in Macon County and Country Crossing in Houston County.

Country Crossing closed its doors shortly before state troopers arrived, and Tyson considered that a success because the casino ceased operation and remains closed — but eventually a judge issued a restraining order on behalf of VictoryLand, which uses about 8,000 electronic bingo machines and employs 1,600 people.

USA Today has described Alabama's gambling fight as unique because electronic bingo operators have built the facilities and are employing thousands of people, daring the state to come after them in an economy where jobs are at a premium.

On March 8, circuit Judge Robert Vance Jr. ruled that the attorney general should step in and defend the state's interests in gambling cases. His stance on whether the governor's task force has the authority to enforce gambling laws was less clear.

On March 15, Riley appealed Vance's ruling to the Supreme Court, and now the court must consider who should be in charge of bingo litigation.

Riley's attorneys argue that the governor as supreme executive of the state has the ultimate authority over state litigation if there is a conflict between the governor and the attorney general. The Birmingham News said.

"Judge Vance's ruling represents judicial activism at its worst," Riley said before appealing. "The law of Alabama clearly gives the governor the authority to designate certain active and retired district attorneys to appear in cases anywhere in the state, but Judge Vance has invented an additional requirement that the attorney general must give advance approval before they can participate in such cases."

"That may be what Judge Vance thinks the law should be, but that is not what the law is. Judge Vance has clearly exceeded his authority in legislating from the bench."

Riley also appealed to the Supreme Court another circuit judge's March 5 ruling blocking the task force from taking action at any bingo casino anywhere in the state unless the local district attorney requests its assistance.

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